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25 October 1960

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief, Sino-Soviet Bloc Area

THRU : Chief, China and Asian Satellites Division

FROM : [REDACTED]

SUBJECT : Comments on an NIC working paper, Indications of Communist Intentions in Laos and South Vietnam.

1. [REDACTED] the current Indications Control Officer, has asked for our comments on this paper. They are as follows:

General:

2. The paper represents a commendable research effort and a project that will undoubtedly be of considerable value in its final form. As it now stands, however, we feel the paper leans too heavily on speculation.

Laos:

3. The paper suggests Kong Le plotted his coup in conjunction with the Communists. We have not seen sufficient valid evidence to support this proposition. Had international Communism been behind it, we probably would not have witnessed the initial fumbling for a government nor the August negotiations between Souvanna Phouma and General Phoumi. We also doubt that General Vo Nguyen Giap, North Vietnam's Defense Minister and Chief of Staff, was training Pathet Lao guerrillas during his absence from the public scene in Hanoi. General Giap would not have to disappear from a comfortable office to plot military operations and he could leave the prolonged field trips to his subordinates.

4. It is also difficult to accept the suggestion that Khrushchev failed to visit Hanoi early September--we do not know that he actually was invited--and went to Finland to distract attention from impending moves in Laos. Laos has been given considerable attention in bloc propaganda. This propaganda is designed to discourage pro-Western intervention in Laos and it rumbles ominously, if not very specifically, about the dire consequences of such intervention.

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5. The Indonesian Consul General in Hanoi has been told that North Vietnam would intervene in Laos if another outside nation did. We believe such action is likely if Thailand or South Vietnam move military forces into Laos. The NIC paper may wish to take this assessment into consideration.

6. While the Communists would consider Kong Le's coup as a wind-fall profit, their position in Laos is the strongest it has been in years. In part, this position is due to Hanoi's guidance and logistic support but we doubt these could have been used to the best advantage if there had not been a well disciplined and organized native Communist movement. The NIC paper is inclined to dismiss the local Communists as amateurs when, in fact, we believe the Neo Lao Hak Xat Central Committee and the Pathet Lao command are considerably more than "a few guerrilla commanders"--they are tough professionals with sufficient experience to know a target of opportunity when they see one.

7. The ultimate bloc objective in Laos is a Communist regime but a Communist-neutralist coalition will be an acceptable first step toward this objective. Given the Pathet Lao military position and the Souvanna Phouma-Neo Lao Hak Xat negotiations, the Communists probably feel their chances for achieving step one are good, with the Neo Lao Hak Xat/Pathet Lao combination adequate to the situation so long as there is no Western military intervention to upset the present power balance.

South Vietnam:

8. Since early September, we have seen Hanoi virtually spell out its plans for a two-pronged paramilitary-political offensive to overthrow President Diem. We suggest this section of the NIC paper could be brought more sharply into focus by incorporating material which appeared in the Central Intelligence Bulletin on 9 September, 23 September, 6 October, 13 October and 14 October.

Relations to the Sino-Soviet Dispute:

9. The fact that North Vietnam did not send an official delegation to Peiping for the 1 October celebrations does not mean that Hanoi may be aligned closer to Moscow. While it tries to straddle the major ideological issues of the Sino-Soviet dispute, Hanoi has repeatedly shown considerable sympathy for elements of the Chinese position--particularly those which

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suit North Vietnam's own ambitions. The most notable example is the North Vietnamese endorsement of violence as a means to attain power. The political commissar of the North Vietnamese army has put guerrilla warfare into the context of a Communist holy war by repeatedly citing Lenin as an authority that violence pays dividends.

10. We would be glad to provide any assistance we can in preparing the final paper. This offer includes the use of our files and further detailed discussion if the author of the paper believes it would be helpful.

Noted and ...